

merit, from John Jay College of Criminal Justice. Even as an undergraduate, she participated in community programs that helped others. These experiences helped her develop her interest and skills in community relations.

Prior to joining the Community Relations Bureau, she worked as a senior paralegal in various bureaus in the District Attorney's office. She worked as a legal secretary in the Eastern District office of the United States Attorney General.

Sharon's biggest love is working with our community's young people as she is always willing to volunteer her knowledge and experience to help others. Remarkably, she plans to serve as an example to our students by continuing her education in law school.

Mr. Speaker, Sharon Devonish-Leid has been a shining star in the community by bringing residents and law enforcement together. As such, she is more than worthy of receiving our recognition today, and I urge my colleagues to join me in honoring this, truly remarkable person.

HONORING JERRY PRETE

HON. RAHM EMANUEL

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, July 9, 2004

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to join with the Elderly Housing Development & Operations Corporation and the people of Chicago in honoring the late Jerry Prete with the dedication of the "Appreciation Garden" at North Park Village in Illinois. A man who committed himself to helping his fellow citizens, Jerry Prete lived life to its fullest. His family, friends and the seniors of the Chicago area are testament to the quality of his character, honor and integrity.

Jerry Prete achieved his success through hard work and determination. He dedicated his life to public service and the people of Chicago. An active member of the Christian Family Movement since 1950, he assisted in developing leadership training and motivation for them until the 1970s. In the 1960s, the Chicago Senior Senate was formed and expanded into 400 chapters with Jerry's leadership.

In this quest, Jerry united with the National Council of Senior Citizens to submit a proposal to the Department of Housing and Urban Development for the funding of subsidized living at North Park Village. Today, the Prete, Senate, and North Park Village Apartments are considered some of the finest senior citizen apartment buildings in the Nation.

Jerry made a lifelong commitment towards helping seniors gain access to affordable housing—eventually assisting the implementation of about 30 multiple dwelling units around the United States. He was a champion of many causes for seniors including the expansion of Social Security and Medicare benefits, lowering the cost of prescription drugs, lowering taxes, and working toward the creation of the Circuit Breaker program.

Aside from working to help seniors, Jerry was a passionate advocate for the religious community. From the mid-1950s until 1995, Jerry and his wife Anne operated the Alverno Bookstore, which they established to meet the needs of the local Christian community.

Mr. Speaker, I join with the Elderly Housing Development & Operations Corporation and the seniors of North Park Village in honoring Jerry Prete. Today, numerous Chicagoans have reaped the benefits of one man's heroic dream. May God bless the Prete family and the memory of a man who was truly loved by his friends, his community and his family.

A TRIBUTE TO THE LIFE OF MR. BILL THURSTON OF VALLEJO, CALIFORNIA

HON. GEORGE MILLER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, July 9, 2004

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to call to my colleagues' attention the recent passing of a good friend, an outstanding educator and public servant, and a wonderful husband, Bill Thurston of Vallejo, California in my congressional district.

I urge my colleagues to read the article that follows below about Mr. Thurston's life, his passion, and his significant contributions to the city of Vallejo and the greater Solano County community. Bill was a longtime history and political science instructor at Solano Community College and a member of its board of trustees. He served on the county and state Democratic Central Committees for 22 years, and served eight years on the Democratic National Committee.

He was a friend and supporter to my father for his work in the state legislature and he was a mentor to me about the education of children and the needs of our community.

To Bill's wife of over 25 years, Rosemary Thurston, and to all of Bill's family I offer my sincere condolences at this time. For the many of us who were lucky enough to know Bill and to call him our friend, our lives are richer for it and we will always carry a place for him in our hearts. May he rest in peace.

[From the Vallejo Times Herald, July 7, 2004]

LONGTIME VALLEJO EDUCATOR AND ACTIVIST
DIES AT 74

(By Robert McCockran)

Bill Thurston, a longtime history teacher, state Democratic Committee leader and Solano Community College trustee died Tuesday. He was 74.

A family member said Thurston, 74, was having shortness of breath (about 10:25 a.m.) and had to be rushed to (Kaiser Permanente Medical Center) and collapsed in the hospital.

Another family member said Thurston's wife, Rosemary, was distraught and unable to talk about her husband's death.

"We can say that he's gone and we can say that he didn't suffer," the family friend said, adding that a memorial service will be arranged.

For 20 years, Thurston taught political science and history at Solano Community College.

"I feel very sad, very sad," said Pam Keith, a fellow trustee. "He was just a very special person to me and I'm going to miss him very, very much."

"There will be a lot of people turn out for this guy, whatever the situation is. He's got 500 children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, (and) great-great-grandchildren. And he's touched so many lives over the years, one way or another. People that you don't even know about," Keith said.

Another fellow board member, Willie McKnight, called Thurston "a great educator" and noted that they were fraternity brothers, having joined Alpha Phi Alpha in 1979.

McKnight said Thurston loved music, although he didn't play any instrument and, he often spoke at his church. "He always was willing to speak and was always trying to uplift our black boys and girls."

Pelton Stewart, executive director of the Continentals of Omega Boys and Girls Club, said when he first came to Vallejo Thurston took him under his wing and "told me some pitfalls to avoid politically in our little city."

"He was a real long time dedicated supporter of the Boys and Girls Club. He and his wife were always at our banquets, always supporting. He was just a great man," Stewart said.

"He gave a lot back to the Vallejo community. He was very proud of his African ancestry and helped with the African American library in Oakland and very proud of the education system here in Solano County."

Thurston was born Jan. 15, 1930 in Logtown, Mississippi. As a young child, he once recalled watching police wake a sleeping African-American man at a train station. They kicked him, then shot him in cold blood, Thurston told an interviewer.

Thurston's family moved to California in 1944, and at age 17, he joined the military. He served in Korea, Germany, the Philippines and Okinawa before leaving the service in 1964.

Thurston earned an AA degree at Solano Community College and a BA at California State University at Hayward. In 1972, he began teaching at Solano Community College.

"I never taught a class without dealing with reality," he once told a reporter.

"In all the U.S. history classes I taught, I always included segments on the failures of Reconstruction after the Civil War and on the struggles of women. I taught the bad things and the good."

In January 1985, Thurston was elected vice-chairman of the California Democratic Party.

He served on the county and state Democratic Central committees for 22 years, retiring in 1994. He also served eight years on the Democratic National Committee.

In May 1988, Thurston was a delegate for presidential nominee Michael Dukakis.

But Thurston was not so partisan that he ignored weaknesses of his fellow Democrats. He once referred to Oakland Mayor and former California governor Jerry Brown as a "flake" and said he was not overly impressed with former President Bill Clinton.

Frank Jackson, former president of the Vallejo Chapter NAACP, said of Thurston: "We go way back. Bill and I were real close friends."

Jackson said he served with Thurston on an affirmative action committee at Solano Community College.

"The thing I liked about Bill, he was fair and equitable. When something wasn't right, he'd say 'this isn't right' or 'this is the thing that we're doing,'" Jackson said of his fellow NAACP member.

"Any time I would call on him and ask him to do anything he was always willing to help out. And, anytime anybody called me about anything political, I would tell them to call Bill Thurston," Jackson said.

Mel Jordan, an architect for the Vallejo City Unified School District who designed Jesse Bethel High School, said he was very close to Thurston.

"Basically, Bill Thurston is almost like a second father to me. In other words, a mentor. He really assisted me in a lot of decision-making types of things for my own personal life," Jordan said.